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Get the CIA out of the news business

Sigh . . . The Central Intelligence Agency is at it again. Trying to infiltrate American organizations — specifically news organizations — while infiltrating other countries.

One of George Bush's good decisions when he was CIA director several years ago was to end the CIA policy of using full-time foreign correspondents as part-time spies and vice versa. Now, J. Richard Nokes, editor of the Oregonian in Portland, brings back word from an American Society of Newspaper Editors convention that Bush's decision has been reversed.

Adm. Stansfield Turner, the current CIA director, admitted to the editors that on three occasions he has arranged for journalists to act for the CIA. He also said he "would not hesitate" to use reporters as spies if that was the only way to get information he wanted.

President Carter should damn well instill some hesitation in Turner. If the President won't, then Congress must in its drafting of a new CIA charter. And any reporter caught working for the CIA (catching CIA agents has never seemed much of a problem) should be immediately fired by his news organization.

Turner claims that a policy of not using report-

ers "could put us in a position of not doing something of great value to the country," adding that "a lot of correspondents would be patriotic enough to do this."

Former CIA Director William Colby made the same kind of phony flag-waving arguments back in 1977. He claimed that reporters, Peace Corps workers, Fulbright scholars and others should be considered fair game for spy work.

The utter stupidity in such thinking is that the minute that any foreign government thinks that any of those people may be spies, they lose their effectiveness in the job they're supposed to be doing. They also aren't likely to be much use as spies.

Reporters, specifically, are overseas to tell the American public what's happening abroad. That's their "great value to the country."

They can't do that if everyone in their host country, from government officials to dissidents, thinks they're moles for Stansfield Turner & Co. Would you talk freely to a reporter, even in this country, if you thought he might relay the entire conversation to the government?

The CIA has a tough job to do. So do journalists. The two are not compatible. Until the CIA realizes that, its intelligence remains in question.